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JAN 13 1898

The Black Cat

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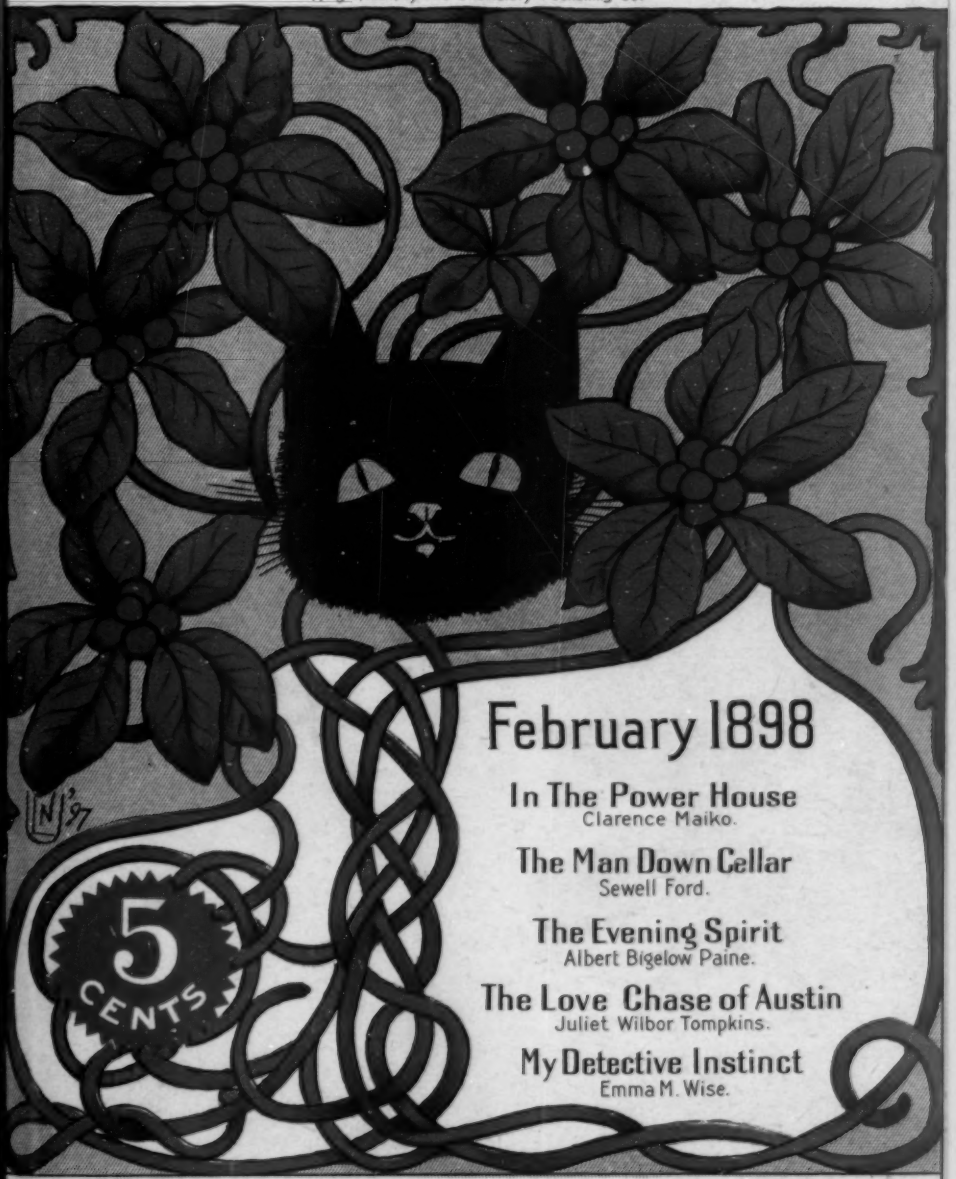

February 1898

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The Man Down Cellar
Sewell Ford.

The Evening Spirit
Albert Bigelow Paine.

The Love Chase of Austin
Juliet Wilbor Tompkins.

My Detective Instinct
Emma M. Wise.

THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING CO., 144 HIGH ST. BOSTON, MASS.

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Holiday rhymes
That hold workaday reason

MONDAY **S** is for Sarah, so slight but so grand,

TUESDAY **A** is for Ada, first star in our land,

WEDNESDAY **P** for Paderewski, plays pianos for gold

THURSDAY **O** for Otero, the dancer so bold,

FRIDAY **L** stands for Lillian, America's pride

SATURDAY **I** stands for Irving, who walks with a stride

SUNDAY **O** stands for Others, who sing as they go

Because they earned rest with SAPOLIO

USED EVERY **WEEK-DAY**

BRINGS REST ON **SUNDAY**

Bring holiday season
In workaday times.

The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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No. 29. FEBRUARY, 1898. 5 cents a copy. 50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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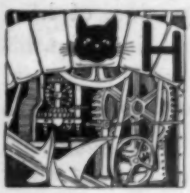
In the Power House.

BY CLARENCE MAIKO.



HAVE you ever heard them — the voices of the juice? You can hear them every night at the Power House, when all the city sleeps; you can hear them rising from the motors of the trolley cars, and you can hear them, very plainly, sizzling around a Crooke's tube, when it is all green and crinkly with sparkling rays; but, if you value your peace of mind, you won't listen to them. At any rate don't believe in them, for, if you do, you will find yourself entertaining very peculiar ideas about the inanimate matter they come from; ideas which, if you proclaimed them abroad, would land you in an asylum as fast as railroads and good friends could carry you.

Besides being an anarchist, the only thing the matter with Michael Casey was that all night long he listened to the voices of the juice, that came out of the whirring, sizzling, rotating things in the Power House. When the rest of the night watch were very sensibly dozing in their chairs Casey would move around with staring bright eyes, listening to the talk from the dynamos and the alternators; but his special pet was the Man-killer, a big two-thousand volt Brush machine — a gruesome, crooning she-monster.

The Man-killer knew she was not to blame for having her frame-

work grounded, but, nevertheless, she felt responsible for three killings; her conscience was very black, and the voice that came out of her was melancholy with protest and complaint. Then, she shivered because her armature was not perfectly balanced, and as the number of her vibrations happened to be the natural number belonging to a bar of steel in the field magnet, the voice of the bar had to join her in a long-sustained howl, like that of some awakened drunken thing in delirium.

She was a sick, cranky girl, and unpopular socially with her neighbors in the Power House, the lively Thomson-Houston alternators and the big purring Westinghouse dynamos; they had no blood guilt on their souls and they let her severely alone.

There was one garrulous little alternator that the Man-killer particularly hated, because he giggled and tittered at her all the time. Moreover, though he couldn't raise a current of one hundred volts, the alternator was boastful of his deeds. He had made "juice" for a theater in bygone days, and told a story of how, one night, because a scene-shifter had thrown dirt into him, his bearings became hot, and the lights in the theater began to go out; then a nervous spasm ran over the audience and they started to stampede for the doors, but his engineer was a man of sense and presence of mind; he brought great chunks of ice from the water cooler and held them on his bearings, while the alternator struggled and labored and managed to keep up enough current to light the house while the people were quieted.

He was very proud of that feat, the alternator was, and he told it often to the admiring machines in the Power House. But one day he had to yield first place as popular hero to Number 4, Westinghouse dynamo, who racked and tore himself in two to keep up the current in the trolley circuit, when two of his mates burnt their armatures. It was found out afterwards that a car, full of people, had been in the middle of the grade on Nob Hill, when the current went down, and that if Number 4 had not fought and won his fight with the "juice," the car would have slipped and rolled, killing everybody in it.

If Casey's mental tissue had not been so diseased by contact with frowsy, bewhiskered, spectacled, foreign persons down in the dimly lighted, ill-smelling haunts where those disciples of

"Force" foregathered to air their poisonous doctrines, he would have appreciated the heroism of Westinghouse Number 4, and would have smiled at the yarn of the conceited little alternator.

Being what they were, Casey and the Man-killer fell in love with one another. The Man-killer's affection for Casey was natural, because Casey fixed her insides, and freed her from pain when anything went wrong, and oiled her, and cleaned her, and sympathized with her generally; but Casey's affection for the Man-killer was unnatural and in strict violation of the First Commandment, for it was worship, the paradoxical worship of his cult for Great Sin-Stained Power.

Every one in the Power House had an awe of Casey. He knew nothing about Ohm's Law, or amperes, or volts, but he was on terms of mysterious intimacy with what he called "the juice," and we term electricity. In the diseases of the machines that ran the trolleys and lights of the city, in connection fractures, commutator flats, and insulation burnings, and in other more obscure ailments, he always diagnosed and cured when all others failed. Then his fellow-workers in the Power House, who were all honest members of the Amalgamated Order of Sons of Toil, knew something of Casey's fanatical foreign friends and were afraid.

Casey never missed their fellowship. He made up for all that and more, too, by long exchanges of confidence with his big whining pet, the Man-killer. Late at night, when the watch were busy adjusting the sparking brushes on the whirling machines, he listened for hours to the wail of her flying armature, and every little accent and quaver of her voice Casey understood. Then he used to talk back to her in a language unknown and a voice unheard. It was not pleasant to see Casey and the Man-killer having one of these chats. There was a secrecy and furtiveness in Casey's manner on those occasions, and a wicked bh-r-r bh-r-r from the voice of the machine that made one feel they were whispering things it is not good for any man to hear.

It actually made Westinghouse Number 4 blush up to the bolt heads of his frame to see them making love to one another — for he was a highly proper young thing who had been brought up very strictly. But those rogues of alternators! They acted like a young lady's little brothers, who hid under a sofa and

watched her beau kiss her. They were very provoking and the Man-killer considered their remarks highly insulting. In her opinion her relations with Casey were perfectly proper. To be sure, she had confided in Casey to an extent she never had in any one else, but then Casey loved her and understood her. She had told him how conscience smitten and unhappy she was because she had killed those three fools who should have known better; and Casey had given her absolution with an assumption of authority that made her think him commissioned by Rome. It was very good of Casey, and made her feel happier and run lighter.

When, in an exuberant frame of mind, she told the rest of the machines about it they smiled broadly and ran quiet. They knew men were very peculiar animals anyway, and when one of them understands the voices of the juice that come out of whirligig things like dynamos and alternators, and hangs around coddling a crazy, crooning she-monster like the Man-killer all night long, anything he says should be accepted with a mental reservation.

As a matter of fact, Casey was making a great mistake in trifling with the affections of the Man-killer. He had lied to her as only a villain of his deep-dyed stripe could lie; he had made her all kinds of promises, which she believed, and, happy in the attention and affection he lavished upon her, she stopped her whining howl, and began to hum softly to herself, like a happy woman sure of her husband's love.

Her armature Casey balanced to a very nearly perfect equipoise, and the voice of the bar of steel in the field-magnet had to lock itself up once more in the metal.

It is a great relief for a soul-sick, blood-stained thing like the Man-killer to have some one come and take the burden of guilt and shame away; and if you could have only heard the voice that came out of her armature in those days, — how it swam and sung through the astonished Power House, — you would have realized how she felt.

Like many of her sex, however, she was destined to be the victim of a man's wiles; for in all Casey's fair words, and coddling, and tinkering, there was a deep design. He had freed her from all her pains and aches; he had shut up the haunting, self-accusing voice of the bar of steel; he had cured her of hysteresis;

he had made her sing a happy song, and, unbeknownst to every one, he was now able to run up her current one hundred volts by tightening a few screws in her armature bearings.

The switchboard of the Power House was on the south wall of the dynamo room. It was made out of white marble, and was glistening with brass ammeters and shiny brake handles. Strung out on a line, at the height of the eyes of a man standing, were the fuse boxes of the dynamos, all wired to the feeders from the machines. A fuse is a sort of safety valve for the juice; when there is a short circuit some place outside, and an excessive current of juice is forced through the wires the fuse explodes; or, when too much current comes out of a machine the fuse melts, and the juice arcs out across the room in a blinding white flash two or three feet broad, electrocuting any live thing it hits.

Casey knew the Man-killer's fuse would not stand more than two thousand volts; an additional one hundred volts would arc it, and that meant sure death to any man who happened to be standing in front of it then.

Now, among those whom Casey's frowsy brotherhood of the Red Flag had tried and sentenced in their queer sick brains was the President of the Great Company that owned the Power House, and the trolley cars, and the electric lights of the city.

He was not such a bad man, he was only a man of steely acumen and cold mathematics, who guarded, perhaps a little too harshly, the great interests entrusted to him, who ruled the Great Company with a rod of iron, and whom a rather conservative public did not quite forgive for his stand against his striking employees a year or so gone by.

Casey, of course, thought of the President of the Great Company just as a rabid dog would, and he smiled in his sleep when he dreamed he saw the Great Man standing in front of the Man-killer's fuse on the switchboard, during one of his inspection tours. He could imagine that broad sheet of flame striking fair in the middle of the President's fat white neck; he could almost hear the juice sizzling through him; then a faint smell of charred flesh and the brain picture of the horror-stricken crowd of employees would make him start and wake up gasping in his bed. He dreamed of those things over and over many times, and waited

and longed for the day when a few turns given to the screws in the Man-killer's armature bearings would see it all accomplished.

All this time the Man-killer, oblivious of the dark design that was brewing in Casey's mind, went on crooning softly to herself, happy in her new-found peace and comfort. She did not mind the merry jibes of the alternators, who had become quite sociable; and even the Westinghouse dynamos unbent a little and talked to her in a cordial tone of good-will and fellowship. The voices grew positively hilarious down at the Power House in those days, and when a little Edison General machine made a Fourth of July celebration by burning its pinwheel armature and showering every one with sparks and flying solder and copper wire, the machines took it in good part and shook with merriment.

In and about among them all, listening to the voices, with pale face and feverish eyes, went Casey, stopping every now and then to whisper to the Man-killer, who was piping along joyous and contented, freed from the blood guilt that had troubled her, and trusting wholly the man that watched and tended her so carefully.

What made Casey change from night shift to day shift nobody knew, any more than they knew why Casey always watched with hungry eyes the office door, by which, once a month or so, the President of the Great Company and the Chief Engineer entered the dynamo room on their routine tours of inspection. But then, there are many things happening in a Power House that wise people do not know about, wise insurance people and wise inspectors of water pipes particularly. Day by day, patiently waiting for the curtain to rise on his tragedy, Michael Casey, anarchist, pawed and fondled the unsuspecting machine that was to do murder for him so surely, swiftly, and secretly. His mind was tranquil and at ease — absolutely nothing could go wrong — discovery was absurdly beyond every possibility and question. He was to be at his usual place behind the Man-killer adjusting the sparking brushes. When the right time had come, the screws in her armature bearings were to be given a twist, and the work would be done. He laughed quietly to himself when he thought of the search party going out over the tracks to find where the short circuit had come from, and he smiled as he imagined the wise heads

in the office suggesting arcing cross wires underground, or lightning strokes, or insulation leaks as the possible causes.

Strange it was that it never occurred to Casey that he was trifling with the affections of the Man-killer; that there was a possibility of terrific revolt on her part when she realized how she had been deceived, and was asked to prostitute herself for the commission of the vile and cowardly crime he meditated. It seems as if Casey, who had listened to and believed in the voices of the juice, who knew and understood how the poor, crazy, mad thing used to shudder at her blood-guiltiness when the voices from the other machines cried out to her, "Shame! Shame! Shame!" — it seems as though Casey ought to have had some sort of premonition of what would come. But as we have said before, besides listening too much to the talk of whirligig things, Casey was a red-eyed anarchist.

The tragedy began in the foreordained and providential manner its author wished. The overture was chorused by the voices of the juice, and Casey was the only one who understood and grasped the theme. It was rather long drawn out for Casey, because he knew the President of the Great Company was outside in the office talking business with the Chief Engineer, preparatory to going the rounds of the dynamo room. The weather was especially favorable for short circuits; sullen, lowering rain-clouds blackened the sky, and every now and then Casey could see white forks of lightning flash zigzagging across the skylight above.

The Man-killer was telling her friend Westinghouse Number 4 — they were very familiar now — how happy she was freed from her hysterics and melancholy.

"My morbidness, dear," she said, "I have all put aside, and if I ever get the chance to do anything grand and noble,— like what you did the day you saved all those people in the trolley car,— I shall do it. You see!"

Westinghouse Number 4, who was modest, blushed at this allusion to his heroism, and stammered out something about the pleasure it gave him to hear her good resolutions, and his confidence in her ability to beat him hollow if she had a chance.

Casey, standing by his machine, heard it all, but paid little

attention to it, for his eyes were fastened eagerly on the office door, which had just swung open with a bang.

In the frame of the doorway stood the tall figure of the President of the Great Company. He was dressed, as usual, in a long black frock coat, and he wore a tall silk hat under which the stern, grim features that Casey saw so often in his dreams shone out cold and clear. He stood there some seconds speaking over his shoulder to the Chief Engineer behind him. Around his neck was a high collar, over which bulged a layer of fat, white flesh, and to that Casey's eyes were drawn with irresistible fascination.

It seemed an age to Casey that they stood there talking, while little smoke wreaths from their cigars floated over on the heavy air for him to sniff at.

Mr. Kipling has told us authoritatively that a marine engine and a locomotive are the most sensitive things the hand of man ever made; which proves that Mr. Kipling never knew a dynamo intimately. Around every little molecule of metal in it are invisible eddying, shooting currents, ever at war with one another, attracting, repelling, disappearing and coming again, in a marvelous and inexplicable manner. Surely the pulses of no live thing ever throbbed as does each atom of steel in one of these machines.

Perhaps it was something in the tense, heavy atmosphere; perhaps, like its cousin the Roentgen Ray, the juice penetrated the dark depths of Casey's mind and told the Man-killer what Casey was going to do; anyhow, down in the bowels of the machine some very funny things were happening; all the little currents, by a strange coincidence, were running together, and a great volume of force was rolling up in the bed and frame.

The President of the Great Company and the Chief Engineer had come in and were walking around here and there among the whirligig things, talking in low tones.

Impatiently fingering a tiny screwdriver, Casey followed them everywhere with his eyes glued on a rim of fat, white flesh lapping over the President's high collar. It seemed to him as if they would never get in front of the switchboard.

The voices of the juice had risen louder, and sounded like a grand choir singing a hymn of grave and awful warning, while the soft croon of the Man-killer had sharpened off into a wailing dirge.

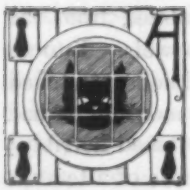
Then the moment came; the tall silk hat turned sharply about, followed by the other man, and walked straight over to the switchboard, halting just in front of the Man-killer's fuse. Never taking his eyes off that sagging ring of white above his victim's collar, Casey felt for the screws. But at the crucial moment his hands, unguided by his keen eyes, missed their mark, and grazed the frame of the machine. Then into Casey rushed the enormous charge of juice that the Man-killer had accumulated from the running together of all those little currents in its bowels. Into an apish squatting posture Casey was drawn, his hands stretched out before him in awful appeal to the infuriated monster he had intended to betray. The muscles of his face twitched horribly; he could not cry out, for his jaws were shut like those of a tetanus patient. His face grew blue, then purple, while pink froth hung from his lips. In the calves of his legs and in his wrists great lumps of agony gathered, and his eyes bulged from their sockets. Suddenly he became numb and was conscious only of wonderful music — the music of the juice — the sweetest thing living man ever heard — the mysterious music which every one who is electrocuted hears just before death, and hearing, dies supremely happy.

A faint smell of burnt flesh made the President of the Great Company turn around, sniffing; and then he uttered a startled cry, for there, staring straight into his, with a terrifying suggestiveness, were the two dead, uncanny, bulging eyes of Michael Casey, anarchist and traitor.

The chorus of the voices that came out of the whirling armatures had risen into a wild, weird chant, but shriller, higher than all the rest sounded the wail of the Man-killer; for the voice of the steel bar had come to life again, and joined it in a morbid howl, like something damned.

The Man Down Cellar.

BY SEWELL FORD.



A MAN is liable to make mistakes during his honeymoon. Ours was six months old when I made mine. Ruth and I had just come out of the West, where we had wooed and wedded, to settle down not many miles from her old home. It was a beautiful little New England town, just the place for a charming girl like Ruth to live in. Furthermore, we had taken an artistic little cottage, and, to make everything complete, we were to have a jolly house warming, that I might meet some of Ruth's relatives and friends, especially the members of her old whist club.

All the forenoon we had been in a whirl of preparation, for we were to meet the party on the five-o'clock train, and there were the butcher, the baker, and the modern substitute for the candlemaker, to be urged into activity. Then about half past three Ruth discovered that a hand mirror was wanted, and posted off down town after it, remarking that Cousin Alice was most particular about her back hair, and never could get along without that glass.

Hardly had she turned the corner of the next street when a telegram arrived bearing her address. With that half-guilty feeling that a newly married man has on assuming such privileges, I opened it and read:—

"Theodore coming four o'clock train. Meet him. M. R. B."

Mrs. "M. R. B." was Ruth's mother, but who the deuce was "Theodore"? Ruth would know, but here it was within fifteen minutes of train time and she was not in sight. Well, I finally decided that Theodore must be one of Ruth's numerous relatives, and that it was my bounden duty to go to meet him.

When I was half way to the station I remembered that I had

not the faintest idea as to Theodore's looks. But on I went, determining to single out any stray male who might act as if he were looking for some one.

There was such a male. His narrow face with dark side whiskers vaguely reminded me of somebody. He acted like a stranger, too, so I rushed up to him.

"I am Mr. Crosby," I said. "Are you — er — look — "

He said he was looking for Mrs. Ruth Crosby.

"Then it's all right," said I, "for I am Ruth's husband."

We chatted pleasantly until we reached the house. Then we sat down in the ample Shaker rockers on the piazza and proceeded to become acquainted. As if to facilitate matters, Theodore suggested smoking. Even then it was not until he had produced his cigarette case, and I had noticed a yellow stain on two fingers of his right hand, that I suspected him at all. But at that point I thought of something that startled me. Hastily making a flimsy excuse, I rushed into the house and opened the big photograph album in which Ruth keeps a pictured catalogue of all her relatives, even unto the third and fourth degree of cousinship. Yes, there was his picture.

Going back to the piazza, I studied Theodore thoroughly. I noticed a nervous contraction of his forehead and a twitching of his fingers which convinced me that it was as I feared. This must be my wife's Uncle Theodore, — the skeleton of the family closet.

I had often heard his history. He had been a bank clerk whose mind had been unbalanced by a number of causes. Some said it was because he had worked too hard in trying to untangle a set of books which had been hopelessly muddled by an absconding cashier. Others laid his mental collapse to an enthusiastic study of whist problems; while the doctors had ascribed his condition to excessive cigarette smoking. Anyway, he had, to put it bluntly, gone crazy.

True, Theodore had been discharged as cured and had left the asylum about a year ago; but I couldn't run the risk of having my wife humiliated by his presence. And already I began to think of all sorts of unpleasant things that might happen.

What if he should get hold of the carving knife and run amuck

during dinner? Worse yet, what if he should smash some of Ruth's cut glass ware, or slash her drawn work doilies (wedding presents, both), or, most horrible of all, what if he should trump his partner's ace?

Urged to the point of desperation by a thought of this last possibility, I made up my mind to get him to a safe place and keep him there until Ruth arrived. From the brief, non-committal remarks with which he met my attempts to draw him out, I felt that something was brewing in his irresponsible mind. Even then I could detect a queer look in his eye. I must act promptly.

"Let's take a look through the house," I suggested craftily.

It was an innocent proposition, but Theodore declined. He was quite comfortable on the piazza.

"But you haven't been inside at all," I urged.

"Oh, the house will keep."

There, he was going to be obstinate and perhaps violent. I am not much of a diplomat, but on that occasion I mustered up all my powers of persuasion. The enticements held out to the fly by the historic spider were nothing to my efforts. There was a sinister gleam in his eye when he finally consented. Once we were inside I breathed easier, and led the way straight towards a door at the rear of the hall.

"We will begin with the cellar," I said with a wink, "Rare old wine, you know."

"The cellar?" There was a queer ring in Theodore's voice as he said this. "I don't think I care to look at your cellar, Mr. Crosby. I don't drink; and I haven't the slightest interest in cellars in general or your cellar in particular."

"Oh, but you must see it. This is an extraordinary cellar. There's not another one like it. I insist, now."

I tried to say this pleasantly, and opened the door for Theodore to pass down first, thinking, as I did so, that the rollway door was locked, and that the windows were too small for him to get out of.

Whether Theodore read my thoughts or not, he drew back in haste. By a quick movement I jumped between him and the front door.

"What does this mean, sir?" he asked.

"It means, my dear fellow, that you've got to go into that cellar and stay there until Ruth comes back."

"What nonsense is this? Are you crazy?"

I had to smile at his question.

"You'd better go peaceably," I told him.

Theodore stared wildly at the cellar door and then at me.

"You blithering idiot! Stand aside and let me out."

"Not much."

Then he made a rush to get past me.

"No, you don't," said I.

I caught him fairly around the shoulders, and the scrimmage was on. It was as pretty a rough and tumble as I had been in since my football days. Theodore was no weakling. He jammed me up against the hat-rack, and it went over with a crash. Then I squirmed behind him, and tried to rush him towards the cellar door, but he grabbed the hall seat and handicapped me. But after a few moments of this, during a wild struggle at the inner end of the hall, I managed to shove him through the cellar door onto the stair landing. Before he could face about I had turned the key in the lock.

I was still breathing hard when Ruth, leading a small boy of ten by the hand, and heading a jolly party of young folks, appeared in the door. I was scarcely prepared to play host at that particular moment, but there was no escape. I noticed a startled look on the faces of the guests nearest the door as they peered over Ruth's shoulder. A glance which I caught of myself in the pier glass explained it. My collar was gone, my vest ripped open, my hair rumpled, and my coat torn. I certainly hardly looked the happy young husband welcoming his wife's friends.

Ruth gave one glance at the wreck in the hall, another at me, and then shrieked, "Why, George! What has happened?"

"I — I've been meeting Theodore," I gasped, fishing the telegram out of my trousers' pocket.

"Theodore! Why, here is Theodore with me — my little brother, you know."

By this time the visitors were exchanging mystified glances.

"That may be your Theodore," said I, "but mine is in the cellar."

"In the cellar?" gasped Ruth.

"Yes; I was afraid he might have one of his — er — spells, so I got him down there, though it was hard work. Perhaps I mussed him up a bit, but he has done as much for me."

"George," said Ruth desperately, trying to be calm, "whom are you talking about?"

"Why, Theodore, your crazy uncle. A telegram came while you were away, saying that he was coming on the four o'clock train, so I went down and met him."

"But Mrs. Crosby's uncle is at home," exclaimed one of the guests, who until now had stood spellbound with amazement at this strange reception.

"And it was my little brother Theodore that the telegram was about," chimed in Ruth. "Mamma was going to send him on the four o'clock train to stay a week with us, but when she found out that Cousin Alice and the rest were coming on the next train she asked them to take charge of him, and here he is. I met them all at the station."

I gazed blankly at Ruth during this explanation.

"Then perhaps the man I've got in the cellar isn't your uncle at all!" I suggested feebly.

"Perhaps? Of course it isn't," said Ruth with fine scorn. "But who is it?"

"Look here," I said. "I'll show you who it is." Leading the way to the parlor, I opened Ruth's album, pointed out the photograph, and remarked triumphantly to the encircling group, "There, that's the man down cellar."

"Goodness! That's Mr. Webb," chorused half a dozen voices.

"Idiot," said Ruth in a stage whisper.

"That's just what he called me, dear," I replied.

They all left me and rushed to open the cellar door.

"Has he gone?" came in a trembling voice from below.

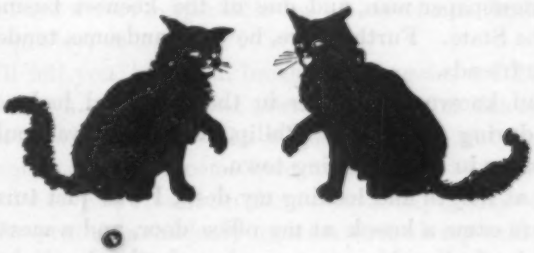
"No, but it is all a —" began Ruth.

"Tell him, then," interrupted the voice, "that I am armed. I have found the wood axe."

After they had assured him that it was all a mistake and that he would not be harmed Mr. Webb came up. Then it was I learned that he was a member of the whist club, and later, that he was engaged to Ruth's Cousin Alice, and had thus earned a place in

the family album. His early appearance was explained by the fact that he had taken what he supposed was an accommodation train, with the idea of stopping for Alice, and had discovered too late that it was a through express.

Well, the tangle was straightened out after awhile, and I did my best to fix things up with Ruth's Cousin Alice's future husband. He said he didn't mind it a bit, but I noticed that he kept at a safe distance, and not once during the evening did "the man down cellar" happen to play at my table.



The Evening Spirit.

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE.

IT was the close of a dismal December day. I had not lighted the gas, and had been sitting for some time alone in the gathering dusk. It rested me after a hard day to sit thus thinking of various things. Now I fell to watching a mottled square of electric light that appeared in the same place regularly each evening, and that, absurdly enough, always suggested to my imagination a large, quarter-doubled and gorgeously printed newspaper.

I had remarked the effect a good many times before, and did so now, half unconsciously, for my mind had suddenly reverted to my old friend Philip Farrington, aged twenty-five, and unmarried, a bright newspaper man, and one of the keenest business managers in the State. Furthermore, he was handsome, tender-hearted, and made friends.

We had known each other in the East, and had come West together during the boom. Philip, at present, was publishing a weekly paper in a neighboring town.

Rising at length and locking my desk, I was just turning to go when there came a knock at my office door, and a messenger boy stumbled in, feeling his way toward me in the dim light.

"I thought mebbe you was here yet," he said, handing me a yellow envelope.

I tore it open, and holding the telegram in range of the electric rays, read: —

"Be in on 7.30 train.

"Farrington."

I glanced hastily at my watch. It was just seven. I signed the boy's book, and we left the office together. As it was a slippery, disagreeable night, the street cars uncertain, I decided

to walk to the station, and had barely reached it when the 7.30 express, with its one bloody eye, came grinding and grumbling to the platform. A moment later Farrington was beside me.

"Hello, old fellow, how are you? Carriage? No, thanks; rather walk up — want to see your town. What's your population? How's your newspaper?"

Farrington was evidently full of some scheme and inclined to proceed to it at once.

"Much business done here?" he continued without pausing.

"The country trade on the square is very large," I said meekly.

"Um — um — how many merchants have you?"

"Why, really, Farrington, I couldn't say. I — "

"Don't attend much to statistics, eh?"

"No, that is — "

"How do you advertise — pretty freely?"

Farrington shot these questions at me as if he were firing them out of a popgun.

"Really, Phil," I pleaded, "don't load and fire quite so rapidly. I believe we have a very respectable lot of merchants both as to number and quality, at least — "

"Well, I'll tell you," he said, breaking in again, "I like the looks of your town. It is a good town — you claim fifteen thousand, but ten will cover it to the edges. You've only got one daily; you need two. I've come here to start the second. Sold out over yonder — just closed up the trade to-day; what do you think of it?" — turning suddenly under a street lamp and facing me.

"I am sure, Philip," I ventured to say, "if there is a field, no one could fill it better than yourself."

"Well, the field is here. I've had this town in mind a long time. Been planning the thing for months; going to call the paper *Spirit — Evening Spirit;* good name — don't you think?"

"Capital, Phil."

"Yes, I've got it all in my mind, just how it will look in type — title, headlines, and all. I can see it right before me now. To-morrow I'll stay here with you to look about a little and talk it over. Monday I'll go to the city for my outfit. I want to be

ready for the first issue New Year's day, see?" and Farrington slapped me on the back with energy.

"Mosby will be terribly cut up over it; he has had his own way so long."

"Mosby of *The Radical*, you mean. Take me to see him to-morrow. Good fellow, I understand, but can't expect to have this to himself always. Somebody bound to come. Friend of yours, is he?"

"Yes, we have been very good friends, indeed, so far."

I could see it all in Mosby's face when we called. The poor fellow had worked hard, and with no great amount of talent had really served us faithfully. Farrington told him openly what he intended to do, and explained the situation in his business-like manner. The blow had fallen. Mosby felt himself prepared for a rival, but not for a man like Farrington. He gave him the right hand of fellowship, and welcomed him with a smile, but he was very pale. I would have given much at that moment not to have been Philip Farrington's friend.

Philip was thoroughly saturated with his plans. The next morning when I accompanied him to the train his last words were of the new daily. Even when the train rolled away from the station, his head was out of the window, and I caught the words, "plate service, specials, seven-column folio, pony camel —" then his voice was lost in the rushing of iron wheels, and a cloud of smoke drifted down between us, blotting out his face, as I supposed, for at least a week.

But lo, three hours later he returned. Thirty miles away there was a broken rail and a wreck. A number of people had been scratched and bruised, and one killed; that one he who at morning had parted from me so full of life, and hope, and vigor; now he lay before me a crushed, inanimate nothing.

His injuries were mainly internal, and his handsome face showed only a slight cut on the forehead. As I looked at that face and that senseless body, I wondered dimly what had become of that fierce energy — that intense force of will which had made it, but a few hours since, a power that had commanded our love, our reverence, and our fear.

I telegraphed to his relatives in the East, and that night I

looked upon him for the last time. He was going back to those who had shed tears at parting, and would shed tears more bitter now, at his return.

I do not think Mosby's splendid eulogy that day was in anywise affected by the fact that Philip's death had removed a dreaded rival. Mosby is a fair-minded man, and Philip had really won his regard during their one brief interview.

As for me, I seemed to have been asleep in my chair, and the past forty-eight hours were as a bad dream.

December, gloomy and dark, dragged along to the holidays. My friend's death had cast a shadow about me, and the Christmas festivities had little in them to make me glad. The January term of court was coming on, and I had a number of cases on the docket. I remained housed up most of the time trying to forget everything else in preparing them for trial.

The new year came in bleak and cold. I stayed all day in my office reading over old letters, and trying to write to friends long neglected. It being a holiday, I had locked the office door, for I had worked hard of late, and did not wish to see any one. About four in the afternoon I closed my desk and, feeling somewhat worn, lay down on a couch that stood near the door and on the opposite side of the room. As I did so, my mind reverted to Philip Farrington; I recalled him as I had last seen him looking from the car window.

"Poor boy," I thought, "to-day he was to have run his first issue. How intensely earnest he was in his purpose. What an immense will force he had. Poor boy."

"*E-e-evening Spirit!!*"

A voice just at my elbow had shouted these words. I started to my feet, and turning quickly, was just in time to see the door close and a folded paper drop noiselessly to the floor!

I looked at both in amazement. I could have sworn that the door had been locked, in fact it had been tried that day by a number of people who had gone away grumbling at my supposed absence. I stared at the white square lying on the floor. There it lay, a neatly printed sheet apparently, folded so as to reveal the first few letters of the dashing autograph title, the design for which Philip had shown me the first evening of his arrival. What

could it mean? I felt myself turning queer, then suddenly leaned forward to pick up the paper.

As I did so it seemed to me that its bright, black letters began to blur. I closed my eyes involuntarily to clear my vision. When I opened them a second later it was gone. I rushed to the door. It was locked.

I dropped into a chair, feeling decidedly weak. "This will never do," I said dryly, "never in the world. I must see a doctor at once. I haven't been feeling very well lately, and I need some medicine. I must be pretty bad off to have a turn like that."

I put on my hat and went down into the street to look up a doctor. As I turned a corner I came face to face with Mosby. He was hurrying, and I thought he looked pale.

"Oh," he said nervously, "I was just going to see you. A very strange thing has happened — unparalleled, in fact," and he shivered until his teeth chattered audibly.

"What is it, Mosby?" I said, catching something of his disease.

"Come back to my office. We do not get out a paper to-day, and the building is empty. I was there alone. I want to talk to you."

Arriving at the office of *The Radical*, we entered and passed on into Mosby's little den at the left.

"It is very strange," repeated Mr. Mosby, "very remarkable indeed," then he paused as if in doubt how to proceed.

"Twenty minutes ago," he continued, after some hesitation, "I was sitting at this desk getting some copy ready for to-morrow. The outside door was locked to keep out stragglers and 'old subscribers' with New Year's advice. I had just begun writing when all at once my mind turned to your friend Farrington. I recollected that he had intended running his first issue to-day. As God is my witness, at that moment my office door was pushed open and a boy's voice called '*Evening Spirit!*' and a paper was dropped in on the floor! I was terribly startled, and sat looking at it a moment before stooping to pick it up. I saw part of the title, but that was all. When I reached down to get it, it vanished like mist. I was too frightened for a moment to move. Then I rushed out to find you. I suppose you think I'm drunk or sick,

but I haven't had a drop and I am perfectly well," and Mosby glared at me with considerable defiance.

"No," I said, with some agitation, "you are not sick or drunk — at least not in the ordinary way. I, also, am a subscriber to this Evening Spirit." And I related my own experience while he stared at me with mouth and eyes wide open.

"Do you suppose," he asked, in an awed voice, when I had finished, "that he has a very large circulation?"

"I think not, Mosby; I think it will hardly extend beyond us two."

"Twouldn't be fair, you know," said Mosby, with a grim smile, and regaining his courage enough to see the humor of the situation. "Material can't cost much there — help all free — no expenses. I couldn't compete, could I?"

"But if he treated other subscribers as he does us, the competition wouldn't count for anything. Do you suppose he'll come to-morrow?"

Mosby shivered and turned pale again.

"Don't know, I'm sure; I hope not. What will you do if he does?"

"Endeavor to read it without trying to get hold of it," I replied; "maybe we'll get some celestial information." Then, becoming grave again, "Mosby," I said, "seriously speaking, this is a very remarkable manifestation of will force exerted after dissolution of life and mortality. A most unusual continuation of earthly purpose in the unseen. As a matter of science, it seems to me our duty to report the facts to The Society of Psychical Research."

Mosby smiled in a sickly way and started to say something, but hesitated. Finally, seeing encouragement in my face, "I was about to say," he resumed sheepishly, "don't you think we'd better try and be together when he delivers the next issue?"

"Good suggestion. Come over at four to-morrow. I'll make it a point to be there alone; we can lock the door, then, and wait results."

While we had been talking it had grown dusk. As I rose to go, Mosby rose also, in spite of my assurance that I could find my way out.

"Oh, I am going, too," he said hastily; "I am quite through with my work, that is, it will keep — no importance whatever," and Mosby pushed me out of the dusky office and closed the door after us with what seemed to me unnecessary haste. Out on the pavement we shook hands and separated.

Next morning court opened, and during the forenoon I had little time to think about The Spirit.

Then the criminal docket had begun to grind, and the case in hand being one in which I had no interest, I left a little before four, and watching my chance until no one was about, I slipped into my office and locked the door. A few moments later there were three light knocks, and I opened it for Mosby. Then once more turning the key, I seated myself in a chair opposite him, one of us on each side of the door. We conversed but little and in whispers. By and by we heard a step coming up the stairs. My heart beat so loudly that I wondered if Mosby could hear it. But the caller, whoever it was, had too heavy a tread for a spirit. He came stumbling up the stairs, rattled at the door, and went away using bad language. I looked at my watch. It lacked twenty minutes of five. My hand shook so that I could hardly get it back into my pocket. The light in the office was beginning to grow dim.

"Better — light — the gas," jerked out Mosby, "so if it comes late — we can see to read it."

There was a jet not far from the door; I managed to strike a match and turned on a full blaze; then we both felt better, but for the next half hour neither spoke. The clock across the street struck five, then the quarter hour. The suspense was becoming oppressive.

"Must have gone to press late," said Mosby, in a loud whisper.

I laughed out, but my voice sounded harsh and strange, and silenced us both.

"*E-e-evening Spirit!!*"

We bounded from our chairs like a couple of jacks-in-the-box, Mosby with such force that his chair fell backward. The locked door opened about a foot, and an unseen carrier had called out the words and pitched the paper into the room. It lay on the

floor just as I had seen it before, the first letters of the title and three columns of telegraph turned up to view.

"Don't try to touch it, Mosby," I said hoarsely; "we must read it."

By this time I had drawn my chair as close to it as I dared, and now sat down and stooped as low over the printed page as possible. It lay there as plainly visible in the gaslight as reality itself. Mosby, suddenly becoming brave, got down eagerly on his knees beside me, wholly intercepting my view, and bending over it so low that it seemed as if he meant to smell of it.

"Good impression," he said, with enthusiasm, "but type a little worn; must have got a second-hand outfit. Headlines a trifle crowded. First two columns plate, third column Associated Press dispatches. I didn't know they had wires *there*,"— with a husky laugh. "But they seem to have all the modern improvements. Composition good — spacing neat and regular. By the holy Moses, a typographical error! So they make mistakes over there, too."

Evidently, Mosby was more interested in the make-up of the paper than in its contents. Suddenly, however, he became silent. A moment later he looked up at me, pointing to a paragraph in the Associated Press column. I bent over and read: —

BLOOMINGDALE, KANS., January 2.

The proprietor of *The Evening Radical* of this place, after due consideration, has altered the name of his very worthy paper to *The Evening Spirit*, it having been decided that the old name was somewhat too pronounced for the advanced liberality of Western ideas. The first issue under the new name appears to-day with the New Year.

I was about to remark something, when suddenly I noticed that the atmosphere of the room had assumed a bluish cast. I started up and looked at the light; it was like cobalt. I looked at Mosby — his face was like indigo! Then something grasped me by the throat, and the room began to whirl around as it does when one turns rapidly on his heel. I struggled for breath and tried to cry out. Then all was black — the light had gone out — Mosby was gone — the paper was gone — I was alone in the choking, whirling darkness. I made one final fierce effort for breath, regained it, and with a cry of relief — awoke!

I was sitting half upright on the couch in my office. The room was dark except the white, mottled, electric square that blinked and trembled above my desk.

I sat up and stared about me half dazed. There was no doubt about it, I had been asleep; and the startling events of the past twenty-four hours had been a dream!

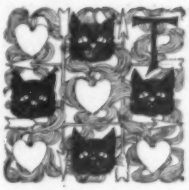
I began to collect myself. The big clock across the street was striking. I counted. It struck six. There was an uncanny feeling in my blood, and I made no unnecessary delay about getting downstairs to the cold, fresh air. Half way down the block I met Mosby.

"Ah," he said, "Happy New Year; little late, but I haven't seen you to-day, until now; I was just thinking about you. Do you know," he continued briskly, "I have decided to change the name of my paper. Present title a little too old style, you know — just a trifle too decided, and do you know, I am going to take Farrington's title, *The Spirit — Evening Spirit.* Poor fellow, he don't need it now, and wouldn't care, I guess. Begin the year to-morrow under the new name. Good name, don't you think?"

"Yes, Mosby," I answered as soon as I could speak; "yes, it is a good name, a very excellent name, and I am quite sure Farrington will not care."

The Love Chase of Austin.

BY JULIET WILBOR TOMPKINS.



HE Lathrops never did anything half way, and so on the night of their great ball, they chartered the whole east wing of the Empire Hotel for the guests from town, and put several livery stables at their disposal. About three carloads of people came up when George Austin did, in time for a late dinner; and though he knew very few of them and spent most of his time in the smoking room, the general festivity of the thing affected him in spite of himself, so that he almost looked forward to the evening. He was not *blasé*, but he did not understand girls very well. The girls who understood him always told him that he was too downright and unromantic.

"You have all the wisdom, and good sense, and cleverness you need," Gertrude Knight often said. "What you want now is a little folly. Play, frisk, take life more humorously. Pose a little, and laugh at yourself for doing it. Make love where you don't want to marry. Quarrel without being angry. Put some excitement into things. It isn't enough to be just a man's man. You must be a girl's man, too."

He laughed at the advice, and did his best to follow it. This trip was one of Gertrude's prescriptions, and had been held out so prettily, with a "You know it's for your good, and I'm going to be there," that he had swallowed it with no stronger protest than a faint wrinkling of his forehead. He would have enjoyed a little practical coaching on the way up, but Gertrude was three deep with men who were born playful, and he did not like to interfere. Sitting next to her at dinner was a mockery, for all his outer attention was monopolized by Mrs. Hathaway, a frolicsome widowette, who had not lost her husband, but simply mislaid him, and who was bent on getting her hand in for the evening's slaughter by a little preliminary practise.

After dinner the east wing echoed for a few minutes with voices and laughter, a note or two of the hubbub being checked off with the shutting of each numbered door, till all was still again. Austin lit his gas, whistling, and opened the dress suit case standing by the table. The broad, smooth layer of white within did not look like his packing, and he lifted it in some wonder. It rapidly unfolded itself, seeming to spread yards and yards in every direction. Austin swung it around dubiously, to be confronted by a broad whirlpool of lace, flanked by smaller eddies boiling up at the end of two flimsy, bag-like sleeves. There was no doubt now of the thing's nature and sex.

"I'd like to know what you're doing in my bag," he said sternly.

Something dropped out of its folds and fell with a thump on the floor. Austin pounced with the scowl of a policeman on a disagreeable duty, and took into custody a flippant black satin slipper, of the same undesired sex.

"Well, somebody seems to have been making herself at home," he was beginning, when his eye fell on the end of the bag, which should have borne a torn brown label. It was not there, nor could he find the triangular red fragment. Both mole and strawberry mark were missing.

So it was he who was trespassing, and in the bag of some strange girl, who might be even now on his trail. He thrust back the slipper and tried to refold the long white garment, which carried on with wanton mischief under his helpless fingers, utterly refusing to go back to its sedate creases.

"If I were romantic, I suppose you'd give me very queer feelings," he reflected as he struggled to smooth into shape the lace-crowned mass of cambric that brimmed over in every direction. "I'd probably be dead in love with you by this time, and I'd hold all that frilly business too sacred to touch. As a matter of fact, you don't affect my pulse in the least. I've seen dozens like you in the shop windows, and your getting into my room by mistake is merely a meaningless accident to me. Wouldn't that make Gertrude tired!" And he smiled to himself as he started out with the truant. In the hall he met a boy carrying a dress suit case, whose torn brown label and triangular red fragment guided him like friendly beacons.

"That is my bag you have there," he said. "This belongs to somebody else."

"Ought to have your names on them," said the boy reprovingly as they exchanged.

Austin opened his bag with some curiosity. There were no signs of feminine invasion here, but in the shadow of the table, where the first bag had stood, something long, and slender, and black suddenly caught his eye. He stooped warily and picked up between his thumb and forefinger a silk stocking.

Evidently he couldn't lose her, he thought, dismayed. And seating himself on the edge of the bed, the stocking dangling limply from his hand, he set himself to evolving a way by which the brazen intruder might be restored to its proper sphere. A considerable undertaking in view of the fact that there was no mark or name on it, nothing to betray the owner, beyond the general inference that she was a woman, and probably rich or extravagant, for the silk screaked luxuriously between his fingers. "And then there was all that expensive lace," added Austin, who would not have known Mechlin from shelf paper.

But there were many rich and extravagant women in the hotel that night. He might post some advertisement in the office, such as, "If the young lady who lost a black silk stocking" —

No, that would hardly do. She wouldn't be likely to come for it. Or he might go from door to door and measure the feminine boots put outside for a polish. Or, best of all, he could send for the boy who had restored him to his own. But some ringing and waiting brought out the fact that "Briggs, being a little feller, always got off at half past nine, and had already gone."

"I see it all," said Austin, with a sigh. "It's a dodge on the part of providence to make me romantic. I'm to wear the thing over my heart till I find the girl it belongs to, and then I'm to fall in love with her and marry her. I don't want her, and, judging by her duds, I can't afford her, but I know a straight tip when I see it. Lead on, you squirmy black thing. I'll follow till I find the right girl, and then I'll flop down, and ask for her hand, — her foot, I mean. I'll show Gertrude I can be as big a fool as any one when I have to. I don't like it, but it's fate."

All the time he was dressing, Austin planned the evening's

campaign, stopping at intervals to consider the silken nemesis that dangled from the gas fixture. It was pretty, with its filmy blackness, and its little vines of openwork up and down the instep. A man might well be stirred by its delicate femininity. "Only he isn't," admitted Austin with a sense of failure. Perhaps the girl herself would accomplish that. Though how he should find her was a problem by itself, since, little as he knew of girls, he was certain she would manage to cover her loss. He must look out for women in black, or with black points, who had come up from town on the late afternoon train. Those were his only clues.

As he drew on his patent leathers something rustled against his foot. It proved to be a folded piece of paper, with a couple of lines scrawled across it in a small, feminine hand.

"I'm sorry, but they aren't my size," he read. "If you will carry a bag exactly like mine, I wish you'd put your name on it. I do hate to label mine." There was no signature beyond a curving flourish of the pencil.

"She's a bashful little thing, this future wife of mine," commented Austin. "Still, I suppose it is what Gertrude would approve of. It's playful, and it's frisky, and it does make things exciting. I don't feel like a novel hero yet, but there is every incentive; I'm going to be sentimental if it kills me." And he kissed the note with deliberate emphasis, wrapped the silk stocking around it, and started to put both in his trousers' pocket, but decided that the inner pocket of his coat was more appropriate.

"Good-by, freedom," he said, slowly turning out the gas. "When I come back I shall be a young man in love."

The first half of the evening was a whirl of black slippers, introductions, leading questions that lead nowhere, and abrupt departures. The quest had taken hold of him like the Klondike fever, so that when he danced, the silken stocking in his pocket seemed to dance, too, and all conversation that did not turn his way was a miserable waste of time. When a plain, unattractive girl went past in black slippers his heart sank dismally, but a pretty one, similarly shod, set him on harder than ever.

"I'd only have about three hours left to fall in love in, if I found her this minute," he was reflecting, with anxious forehead,

when he found Mrs. Hathaway smiling squarely into his eyes. "Aren't you coming near me all the evening?" she said.

Austin understood widowettes even less than he did girls, but he saw, with a reeling heart, that she was all in black, and that her smile meant something. His eyes swept the room, as those of a drowning man might search the horizon before he sank the third time.

"I know what you are looking for," said the meaning voice, very close to his ear.

The waters closed over him.

"Come this way," he said, mechanically following out a plan he had made earlier in the evening, when chance had shown him a hidden corner where a dim red lamp glowed on a low red divan, heaped up and running over with red silk cushions. It had seemed to him an inspired setting for the rose-hued romance he was planning, but the unexpected shadow of a mislaid husband deepened it to sinister crimson.

So he was destined to an unhappy love affair, or else — Shades of his Puritan mother! The idea of winning a warmed-over heart did not appeal to him, but he had pledged himself to romance, and his steps must follow where the stocking led.

"It seems it was you I was looking for," he said, bending over to put another cushion behind her white shoulder. "Will you have — the talisman now?" He smiled down on her, with one hand on the breast pocket where the snaky thing lay coiled.

Her eyes doubled up with laughter.

"And I thought you were shy," she said. "No, you may keep it — for the present. But we are beginning at the wrong end. We have a great deal to go through before we get to — the talisman. You are a very impetuous person, did you know that?"

"But you see, I began about four hours ago. I have gone through the preliminaries all by myself," said Austin. The widowette gave him a look that would have set most heads spinning; but Austin's turned very hard.

"Wasn't it very unkind not to let me share them?" she said. "I love preliminaries."

"It was very stupid," said Austin, wondering if this was what Gertrude called exciting. "I never looked below your eyes, — at

least, not more than a few inches below,— so I did not realize you were in black."

Her mouth curved sorrowfully and she looked away. After an eloquent pause, "But you know my black is not mourning," she said very low, and instinct told Austin that this was the place for an expressive silence. Mrs. Hathaway told him, with a hint of a gesture, that it was also the place to take her black-gloved fingers into his own. And something else told him that he was a little amused and a good deal bored.

She was such an out and out sham; and he hated farce comedy, he was telling himself by way of apology for his laggard heart, when Mrs. Hathaway unexpectedly changed the key. "But what would your dark-eyed blonde say to this?" she asked, with a little laugh, half reprovingly. "There, no fencing. Didn't I tell you that I knew whom you were looking for? Oh, you were very nice to me at dinner, but don't you suppose I know what it means when a man is distrait, and there is a dark-eyed blonde on the other side of him?"

Austin was plainly disconcerted. The widowette's heart was kind, if flighty.

"I'm not going to tease you," she said. "You're a dear boy. Come now and I'll reward you." As she rose, a buckled slipper came into sight. It was black, but even Austin's untutored eyes could see that it was no relation to the one he had held in his hand.

"She isn't the one, and I'm out of it safe and sound," he rejoiced as he silently followed her. "But what in Cain did she think I meant by the talisman?"

"I should like a tiny glass of punch," admitted Mrs. Hathaway, pausing on the edge of a small crowd.

Austin obediently worked his way in, but was blockaded by a group of girls, whose partners were on the same quest. One, whose back was to him, was talking more than audibly.

"Do you know, I'm going to be presented with a dress-suit case," were the first words that caught his attention. "A man asked me to-night how I liked the fad girls had for carrying them, and then wanted to know if I used one, all with the abstracted, conscious air people put on to ask you if you've read 'Cranford,'

when they are going to give it to you for Christmas. When I said I hadn't one, he fairly rushed away. I think he's telephoning for it now."

"Was he tall and rather good looking? Why, he asked me the same thing," cried another.

A third chimed in, with a little shriek: —

"You mean Mr. Austin, a friend of Gertrude Knight's? He led up to the very same subject with me, and then lost all interest and escaped. I wondered what I'd done. Maybe that is the only conversation he knows by heart."

At this point Austin shrank through an opening in the crowd, though too late to escape hearing himself set forth as a possible detective or a probable "agent for high-grade leather goods doing a stroke of business."

When he reached Mrs. Hathaway it was to have his attention called again to the dreaded group of girls, and thence to a couple behind them standing against the wall,—a lanky, red-haired youth and a tall girl whose face expressed shrewdness and energy rather than ancestors. Both were evidently spectators.

"He is Brewster, the *Recorder* artist, you know," his companion explained, "and he's sketching those girls. They don't know it, or, at least, each thinks the others don't know she knows it. The woman is the society reporter, and she is taking in every word they say. I watched her all the time you were gone."

For the next fifteen minutes Austin followed the widowette abstractedly through the rooms, trying to combine a polite outer conversation with her and a rude, insulting inner one with himself. At the end of that time, finding him unprofitable ground, Mrs. Hathaway effected a dexterous change of partners by which he was transferred to his "dark-eyed blonde."

"Well, it's time," said Gertrude, as Austin, struck dumb by a sight of the society reporter standing near, hurried his partner out of range of that cool, business-like scrutiny. When they were seated at a little table in a corner of the canvassed porch, with the mysteries of modern catering between them, he turned to her forlornly.

"It's no use, Gertrude. You'd better give me up. I tried to be romantic to-night, and I played, and I frisked, and I made

things exciting — for everybody but myself. And I'm a dismal failure. I can't do sentiment. It doesn't interest me. I don't belong to your race, and I'm afraid I never can learn the language."

"But you want to? It seems worth the while to you?"

"Yes, because I want to talk with you, and I can't hold you without it — hold your interest, I mean. In other women it bores me, but it attracts me in you, tremendously, and it's the only way I can seem worth while to you."

Gertrude stared at him thoughtfully over a little glass of golden wine, boiling up from hidden reefs of broken ice. With the light on her hair and her eyes in shadow she looked allegorical. One might have written above her, "Youth's First Glance at the Scythe of Time," or "Pleasure Confronted by Duty," or "The Dawn of the Soul."

"I wonder if that is true," she said. "I am afraid so. I've played with edged tools till I don't care for anything else. But then," putting down her glass with a smile that spoiled the allegory, "so long as you play with me, I don't know that I mind about the others. Why didn't you come near me all the evening?"

"I was very busy making a fool of myself, by way of education," said Austin with a frown.

An irrepressible laugh came from the other side of the table. "And you haven't guessed yet who she was! Oh, you needn't look at me like that. Do you think it's nice to steal young ladies' black silk hose?"

Austin gasped, recovered, and caught the flying end of the conversation. "And do you think it's nice to put notes in young gentlemen's patent leathers?"

Gertrude shot an inscrutable look across the table, then laughed again. "Didn't the writing tell you anything?" she asked.

"How could it? You never favor me. It was a little like your voice over the telephone, though — small, and clear, and very fast."

"Let me see," she demanded, holding out her hand.

A sudden sound of applause made them both turn towards the doorway that led into a great room, glittering like a diamond in

contrast to the cloudy, opal light of the porch. Little tables had sprung up like mushrooms under a shower of music, and all their occupants were turned towards a figure in black, that had just appeared on a high dais. A ripple of "Mariquita" spread over the room and broke in another wave of applause. The *danseuse* smiled like a delighted child, instead of bowing and languishing. Mariquita knew a thing or two about men and women.

The lights went down till the darkness of the room was pierced by a single broad tunnel of colored radiance, slanting from above, so that the misty figure looked like a fairy about to climb a rainbow. The smoke-like draperies shot up into huge bat's wings and silver stars shone in the folds, as the mysterious dance began.

Austin followed with his eyes, but his mind was still absorbed with his own affairs. So Gertrude was the end of his romance. It had never occurred to him that his Cinderella search could lead him into familiar places. Well, it was less artistic as a denouement, but it saved a great deal of trouble. He had been a little in love with Gertrude for some time. It ought not to be difficult to go the rest of the way.

Mariquita was tossing her draperies into whirling smoke wreaths tinged with fiery light. The silver crescent on her breast swayed tumultuously. A flood of colored stars swept across her filmy skirts. The humming of the hidden violins seemed to deepen the silence. Austin turned to Gertrude, and the glow within him died out as though wet sand had been flung upon it. He felt chilled and oppressed, as though he had passed from rose-colored illumination to thin daylight.

"She is a woman, and nothing else. She wouldn't satisfy you," came the verdict of that terrible, clear-sighted common sense whose mastery he had been trying to break all this long evening. Gertrude was completely absorbed in the dance, steeped in its beauty and color and motion. At a table near by the widowette was pretending to be, while the youth she was educating studied her profile unhappily, but with an absorption that Austin compared discontentedly to his own sensible stolidity.

The music swelled excitedly to its climax. Mariquita sprang forward as though breasting a high wind, a living Winged Victory outlined against tumultuous clouds. A triumphant second, and

then darkness. When the lights flashed up, the dais was empty. "Now for it," said Austin sternly to his reluctant heart. "Fate has given you a straight tip. See that you follow it up."

Through a drawn curtain he caught a glimpse of a flushed and disheveled woman, walking awkwardly in her bulky drapery, which a maid was holding up; and rebelled, as he turned away, against his perception of the ugly side of things.

"Don't let's dance," said Gertrude, as the little tables began to vanish. "It's a desecration, after that. I know a dear little red divan in a —"

But Austin, with a sinking remembrance of a recently buried past, hurried her to a pale-green and wicker affair that he protested suited her much better. "Besides," to her demur that she could "wear a red divan nicely," "I don't want to mix you up with — with a couple I saw there earlier in the evening."

"Tell me about them," said Gertrude, as she dropped down where she was bidden. "Where they *comme ca?*" She curled her middle finger around her forefinger, and held up both with a smile of mischievous meaning.

Austin inwardly shrank and wished she wouldn't. You don't mind things from girls in general, but from your future wife — Then he scowled at himself for a prig, and met her smile with the look it demanded. "You are too little to hear about such things," he said. "Besides, I want to talk about us. Why don't you take off your gloves?

She lifted one hand lazily and let it fall across the arm of his chair. He unfastened the buttons and drew the glove off, finger by finger, deliberately, applying the bellows to his sulky heart. When the cool, fine lady hand, with its record of pampered civilization, was quite free he kissed the back of it. That was pleasant. He would gladly have repeated it very often. And yet —

"I shouldn't think she'd want to let me," ran through his mind, "She is altogether too used to things. Oh, shut up, you carping grandmother!"

"You are getting on," said Gertrude. "I don't believe there is much more for me to teach you in the art of playing. I must give you your degree and send you out to seek your fortune."

"Not if some other girl goes with it. I see all the gold I want right here," with a nod at the bright hair curving back from an innocent little white forehead. Gertrude's eyes were the only part of her that had kept pace with her inward sophistication.

"I wish it could be used as legal tender," she said, pulling a short lock down and studying it regretfully. "When I wanted to go shopping, I'd just have to take a pair of scissors. 'Three strands of dotted veiling, please, and a tress of white chiffon.'"

"Can't I do a curl's worth of something for you?"

"That is an anachronism. You didn't get it out of my lessons," she said, with severity. "Nobody wants locks of hair any more. They're entirely gone out, as keepsakes. They're jay. Why, they are as bad as souvenir spoons."

"What may I want, then?" he asked humbly. "A glove?"

"Not brand new, expensive ones," recovering hers and tucking it into her girdle. "Lace handkerchiefs are nice, though I haven't any to spare. You ought to be satisfied with a silk stocking, I should think," she added with a laugh. "That is thoroughly up to date."

"So sentiment has gone from the head to the foot," mused Austin. "That is rather significant. I wonder if it is a permanent reversal, or just a temporary somersault?"

Gertrude was not interested in the abstract. She bent forward and straightened the flower in his coat.

"Let's talk about us," she said, at dangerously close range.

A couple of hours later Austin stood at the foot of the stairs, moodily watching a dark-eyed blonde who, in voluminous wraps, was coming down a step at a time, talking over her shoulder. She was genuine where the other woman had been sham, she felt what the other acted, yet even that had failed. She could stir him for a moment, but even while his pulses were responding, his mind, sitting loftily aloof, was passing cold criticism on her ideals and standards. He had resented her delight in Mariquita simply because it was so typical of her. He had little sympathy with the passionate quest of sensations as the chief end of man, and her indifference to everything but the personal irritated him.

"I may in time lose my heart. I'll keep at it till I do," he said doggedly, "but I'm hanged if I can lose my head. I'm afraid I'm marrying into the wrong set."

The widowette passed, and he smiled at her good-humoredly and even affectionately. Her ideals did not matter. He was under no pledge to fall in love with her.

As Gertrude caught sight of him and came running down he gave a surprised exclamation. "Why, Gertrude, your slippers aren't black, — they're white!"

"Of course. What else could I wear with this gown? Well, good night. I suppose you have to go back on the early train. Thank heaven, I am not a man. Come to see me to-morrow. Oh, dear, are they waiting for me?"

Austin answered at random as he took her to her carriage. He was puzzled, and tired, and blue with a sense of failure. It was terrible to be so elderly and well balanced. When he was back in his room at the hotel he took a long look at the talisman, which once more dangled from the gas fixture.

"I wonder what kind of a girl really would bowl me over," he reflected. "Tall, and slim, and reserved, I think, with quiet brown hair and thin lips, and eyes that weren't forever telling you how fetching they were. I want a really lady girl, like — oh, I don't know. Little stocking, you're responsible for a great deal."

The early train took back a crowd of yawning, heavy-eyed men, each ready to swear off on late hours for the rest of his natural life, — mankind's invariable mood on the morning after. The feminine element was represented chiefly by Mariquita, looking grievously unfairy-like in the morning light. Austin made a strong effort to think of Gertrude in appropriate phrases, then gave it up with a yawn, and took to the morning paper.

"Say, excuse me, but aren't you Mr. Austin?" The society reporter of the *Recorder* was leaning forward from the seat behind with an air of business-like inquiry. A note-book lay on her knee. Austin admitted his identity unwillingly, with a flush at the memory of what those greedy ears, and possibly that greedy note-book, had taken in the night before.

"Well, I want to ask you about a dress-suit case — "

With colossal dignity he interrupted, "It will be a great favor to me if you will say nothing about that in the papers."

"Well, I won't, if you'll give me back my silk stocking," said the society reporter. "You see it's the only pair I ever had."

"Yours!" exclaimed Austin.

"I'm sorry about that note," she went on. "Mr. Brewster took my bag and his, and when I found that the one in my room was a gentleman's, I supposed he had shuffled them. I've known him since he was that high, you know. I gave it to a boy to take to his room."

"And I waylaid it in the hall," interposed Austin.

"I happened to hear some young ladies speaking about it, and they said you were a friend of Miss Knight's," she continued, mercifully slurring over that part, "so I asked her to point you out to me. I explained why, of course."

"I see," said Austin, handing back the fatal talisman with a smile that was amazingly cordial.

"My business isn't a popular one, so I don't generally label my baggage," said the reporter. "My husband always wants me to keep my name out of it. After this I'll have to, though!"

Austin smiled again, though he was not listening. A great big delight was growing and swelling inside of him, till it was ready to burst forth in a shout. He was under no bonds to Gertrude or any other woman. Fate had put up a trick on him, and the bargain was off. He and sentiment could keep comfortably apart till time should bring him to that really lady girl with the quiet brown hair and thin lips who should bowl him over. He drew a deep breath, as though he had come out of a heavy perfumed atmosphere into cool salt wind.

"Listen here a minute," said the reporter. "I've put Miss Knight down as charming in a costume of heavy white silk relieved by narrow pink satin stripes, and garnished with duchess lace. Can you tell me if that's right? I'd hate to make any mistake when she was so nice. She didn't feel she had to be so abnormally snippy to show that she didn't want to get in the papers."

"I know she had on white slippers, anyway," said Austin, still radiant.

My Detective Instinct.

BY EMMA M. WISE.

HEN I answered the advertisement for a woman detective I was somewhat surprised to learn that I was expected to catch myself. There were a number of minor surprises leading up to that dramatic climax, that ought to have prepared me, in a measure, for the final shock, and which would no doubt have done so had I not been of a peculiarly unsuspecting nature. As it was, the truth struck me with the force of the proverbial bolt from the cloudless sky.

It was my first experience as a detective. It was also my first experience in double dealing. Up to that time I had never played a part except in amateur theatricals at home. Since then — well, this story will speak for itself and me, too.

This is the advertisement responsible for all the mischief: —

> WANTED.— A lady detective for about a week in a private boarding-house. One who can make acquaintances easily preferred. Address, stating price per day, by whom employed in the past, reliability, and references. (Letters confidential.) XYZ, *Daily Telegram*.

The advertisement appeared in the *Daily Telegram* of Sunday, July 10. I read it at first indifferently, then thoughtfully, and finally, impressed suddenly by the dramatic possibilities of the rôle of private detective, with a thrill of a great resolve. After six months spent in china decorating, menu painting, carpet designing, and the general hackwork with which I filled in gaps between rare portrait commissions, the adventurous spirit that had sent me to the city to mend my broken fortunes still craved an outlet. Under the glow of its influence I indited the following letter to XYZ: —

Having no case on my hands at present, I will investigate the trouble at your boarding house for $5.00 per day, exclusive of room and board. I am reliable, energetic, and faithful. My business is always kept strictly private, therefore I must beg to be excused from giving the particulars asked for. Neither do I sign my name when communicating with a total stranger. Should you care to hear from me further, address me under cover of LMN, *Daily Telegram.*

I read my answer over several times before dropping it into the box at the *Telegram* office. Even then I could perceive that my soul had been inoculated with the virus of moral degeneration, which was appearing like a virulent rash in my written words; but so alluring was this opportunity for creating a new rôle, that I exulted in what to my mind seemed a masterpiece of diplomatic correspondence. So replete it was with truths that were in reality that many lies, and with lies that were really true.

In spite of my ingeniously contrived sentences, I did not count much on hearing more concerning the matter; but on Tuesday morning, when I called at the *Telegram* office for my mail, I was given a reply to my letter. Then I received my first surprise.

Call at my home to-morrow (Tuesday) at three o'clock for interview.

(Mrs.) Jane Rennecker, 360 Oak St.

P. S. Do not delay. There is a thief in my house.

The purport of the letter was not in itself startling. It was nothing unusual for a woman who kept a boarding house to find a thief lurking around the premises. Neither was it strange that she should wish to get rid of him without delay. As for the time set for the interview, three o'clock was the most ordinary hour she could have hit upon. The surprise lay in the fact that the writer of the letter was my own landlady!

For more than six months I had been living in fancied security at 360 Oak Street, to be aroused now to the realization that I had been resting all that while in a nest of vipers. In half a year I had become pretty well acquainted with all the boarders, and the first shock of my surprise having worn away, I rapidly took a mental photograph of all the habits, peculiarities, and dispositions of each, as I remembered them. In the first place, the servants, Mrs. Rennecker, her son Jasper, and I — Constance Stewart, — were undoubtedly above suspicion. The guilty person must

be one of the six young men living on the second and third floors. It might be Mr. Baker, who sat at the foot of the table, and ate all the celery before anybody else got down to dinner. I had never liked Mr. Baker very well, anyway, but in view of that morning's developments, it seemed possible that he might be sticking the spoons, and salt and pepper boxes into his pocket and selling them at second-hand stores. Or it might be Mr. Ketchum, who walked in his sleep; though it seemed to be taking an unfair advantage of a man to convict him of thefts committed while in a state of somnambulism. Or Mr. Harkness might have done it; Mr. Harkness smoked cigarettes in bed and burnt holes in the sheets and pillow cases. Then there were Messrs. Williamson, Doyle, and Bentley. Mr. Williamson sniffled when eating soup, Mr. Doyle bit his nails, and Mr. Bentley laughed to excess and said "Sure thing" to every remark addressed to him. All these were reprehensible habits, but not exactly criminal, and I did not like to suspect anybody unless it were Mr. Baker.

But whoever the thief, mine was the hand that must bring him to justice; and these unexpected complications only strengthened my determination to undertake in earnest a case begun in the spirit of private theatricals. And as to appear at the interview in my own character was manifestly impossible, the first thing to do was to pretend that I was somebody else,—a scheme upon which I entered with a zeal that would have furnished an instructive object lesson to philanthropists on the lookout for the increase of crime. In the play in which I had last appeared I had worn a costume whose very simplicity had served as such a perfect disguise that my own mother had failed to recognize me, and I resolved to adopt it again. I went down town and bought a black wig, a pair of eyeglasses and a ready-made, tight-fitting black cloth dress with a stiff white collar. There was a row of rooming houses on Chestnut Street between the car tracks and the viaduct. I paid a week's rent on a small room at No. 98 and turned it into a temporary dressing room, whence I emerged at a quarter before three, arrayed in the toggery in which I intended to call on Mrs. Rennecker.

Mrs. Rennecker's eyes were blue, and not unattractive by nature, but of a strained contraction that might have resulted

from nearsightedness or some nervous shock. They rested on me, as we sat in her cool parlor, only fleetingly, then wandered from one object to another as though always peevishly looking for something lost in early life. At any rate they evidently fathomed nothing of the secrets concealed by my stylish black hair and eyeglasses. Then she began in her drawling voice: —

"What is your name, please, and where are you stopping?"

"Ada Mosby. My address is 98 Chestnut Street."

It was the first lie I had told — exclusive of social fibs — for a good many months, and I was amazed at my glibness. Evidently my new rôle was exactly suited to my abilities.

"It is needless to waste time on preliminary explanations," said Mrs. Rennecker. "I shall not ask you to violate confidences. I could tell by your letter that you are experienced and capable."

I think I blushed a little at that. For the sake of my future salvation, I hope I did. But if so, Mrs. Rennecker must have considered the flush an evidence of becoming modesty. At any rate her manifestly growing good opinion of me took effect on my vanity instantly, and I began to feel very sorry for Mr. Baker.

"We will — ah — proceed to business at once," said Mrs. Rennecker in her hesitating, breathy manner. It was one of her foibles to believe that her misfortunes had developed her latent business instincts. "I have, I regret to say, a thief in my house. A woman."

Then it was one of the servants, after all. I wondered which, and transferred my pity from Mr. Baker to her.

"She has been boarding with me for — ah — six months." Mrs. Rennecker paused a moment and tried to look impressive. "She calls herself an artist." Longer pause and greater effort at impressiveness. "Her name is Constance Stewart."

I fell off a bridge over the Miami River once when a child, and the sensation is something I'm not likely to forget. Still the dizziness of that descent is absolute level-headedness when compared with my feelings at the moment when Mrs. Rennecker pronounced my name. It was as though I had severed all relation with the established system of gravitation, and was whirling through space with the bronze figures of Washington and Napoleon on the mantelpiece attending me as satellites.

Mrs. Rennecker apparently noticed no change in me, however, for when I had recovered myself she was saying: —

"She is the worst kind of a thief. She comes into your home and robs you in such a way that she cannot be denounced until a superabundance of evidence is accumulated. She has been stealing from me little by little for the last six months. She has robbed me of something of inestimable value. She has stolen my son's heart."

George Washington and Napoleon Bonaparte began to waver again, but I quickly calmed my emotions, for I could not afford to lose one word then.

"My son, Jasper, is desperately in love with her, and — he is already as good as engaged to another. Of course it is all her fault. In spite of her refined manner, I believe that she is really both designing and unscrupulous. My son Jasper is an eligible husband for any woman, and she knows it. It's my opinion she came here for the sole purpose of securing so desirable a *parti*."

For the first time in my life I began to experience the pleasure of seeing myself as others saw me. The realization was so different from the anticipation that it was several moments before I steadied my voice to ask: —

"Will you kindly tell me everything you know about this Miss Stewart?"

"To begin with, she is decidedly good looking, and, as I said, refined in manner." I felt a little more kindly toward Mrs. Rennecker than at any previous time during my call. "She has soft, light-brown waving hair, which she wears short; a fine, fair complexion and a distinguished presence. You see I admit her attractiveness. She has not much money, I believe, and earns her living by decorating china. Oh, to look at her you would fancy her a gentlewoman. She gave me excellent references, too, — Judge Goble, Ex-Senator Spears, and Rev. Henry Cadmus."

I smiled at the thought of what those staid, respectable old gentlemen would say, could they but know of my present predicament.

"But there's something wrong with her," said Mrs. Rennecker, sinking her voice to a subterranean whisper and drawing her chair still nearer mine. "I've been gifted with an almost supernatural

power of divining human nature, and I am positive that that woman has done something at some time that she — well, that she would not like the world to know about. What I want you to do is to become intimately acquainted with her and find out what it is. The end justifies the means. My son is a particularly high-minded young man, and if I could only go to him and say, 'Miss Stewart is unworthy of your love,' and prove it to him, his affection would turn to hate."

"Pardon me," I said, "but does she know of your son's love?"

"Know it?" said Mrs. Rennecker. "Naturally, when that is what she has been working for all the time. But my son has never spoken to her on the subject. He is very reserved. In fact, the understanding between himself and his cousin Margaret was brought about by her mother and myself. If it had been left to him, I verily believe it would have been put off forever."

I remembered what a heavy, uninteresting girl his "cousin Margaret" was, and thought the supposition quite likely.

"I should have never known of his love for Miss Stewart," Mrs. Rennecker proceeded, "if I had not found him one day standing over her photograph, looking at it with an expression that a man's face never wears unless the object looked upon is his dearly beloved. I could not forbear questioning him. 'Do you love her, Jasper?' I said. He did not try to deceive me. 'Better than all the world,' he answered. 'And how long have you cared so much for her?' I asked. 'Ever since she came here,' said he. Then I asked him if he had told her about it. 'No,' said he, 'and I shall not — at least, not now. I want to make myself good enough for her, first.' If I had had any doubt before of his affection for her, it would have been dispelled by that. As a general thing, a man thinks he is a little better than anything else in the world. When you hear one of them talk as Jasper did you may know his is a serious case. It hurt me to hear him. I argued with him and tried to make him understand that he is her superior in every way. Indeed, Miss Mosby, I am very proud of my son. He is a great student; he is the soul of honor; he has not much money now, but when he is twenty-seven he will come into quite a fortune left him by his grandfather; we are an excellent family, and he has social position, too, even

if I have lost money, and am obliged to open my home to paying guests. I am very fond of his cousin Margaret, and his marriage with her has been the dearest of all the hopes centered in him.

"He listened patiently when I told him all this, but in conclusion he said: 'O mother, you do not understand. You are entirely mistaken in Miss Stewart. There is a refining grace about her that makes me seem like a mere clod beside her. There is much that I must acquire before I will dare to speak to her of my love.' You can see by that how sensitive and highly strung he is. Ah, Miss Mosby, there are few men like my son. We have talked on the subject often since, and it is always the same story. He does not want her to suspect his love, fearing she will refuse him and go away. Refuse him, indeed! When she perfectly understands the situation, and is simply waiting for him to speak. But you couldn't make him believe that. You see it is an unfortunate attachment of which he can never be cured except by positive proof of her unworthiness. You must be the doctor. The medicine may be bitter, but he must take it."

"But," I said, "why do you not let your son's happiness stand paramount to your own wishes and strive to bring about this marriage instead of thwarting it?"

I never saw Mrs. Rennecker's eyes quite so large as at that moment.

"Because," she retorted, "I don't like her. In spite of her attractiveness my intuition tells me that she is not good enough for him. And besides, I wish him to marry his cousin. Yet I dare not ask Miss Stewart to leave this house, for that would make Jasper desperate and bring things to a crisis. Are you ready to stay here now? I want you to meet her to-night. Come upstairs. I will show you the room you are to occupy. It is next to hers."

I went with her into the hall bedroom that opened off my own pretty apartment.

"This is the only room I have vacant," apologized Mrs. Rennecker. "It is not very large, but perhaps you can make it answer. I wish you to be close to Miss Stewart."

My door was ajar, and Mrs. Rennecker stepped inside. A number of half-decorated pieces of china were scattered about the

room as I had left them upon going out, and a morning gown was thrown over the back of a chair.

"Just see how careless she is," Mrs. Rennecker remarked. "That speaks volumes against her. Here's her picture," she added, taking my photograph from the mantel. "There's a look about her eyes that I never fancied."

Then she showed me my collection of European views, my album of pressed flowers, and my folio of water colors. When she went to my closet and took down my new silk dress with the remark, "This is her best dress; it doesn't fit her very well, either," I could have throttled her with genuine good-will.

By 6 o'clock I was installed in the hall bedroom in the capacity of Ada Mosby, the detective. At 6.30 I went down to dinner. Mrs. Rennecker went into the dining room with me and introduced me as "My friend Miss Mosby, from Pittsburgh." I was motioned to a seat beside Jasper Rennecker and directly opposite my own chair. I had never given more than a passing notice to my landlady's son until that evening. Whenever I had had occasion to think of him at all, I had set him down as a good young man, worthy and serious minded, but endowed with no characteristics that would set the world on fire. But the revelation of the afternoon had made him a figure of considerable importance in my estimation. Whoever the man, a woman is bound to regard him with more than ordinary interest when she learns that he is in love with her. Throughout the meal I glanced up at him whenever I could do so with impunity, and my newly aroused detective instinct perceived many fine points about him hitherto unobserved. His hands, alone, disproved my former impression. Large, firm, strong hands they were, indicative of a force of character that surprised me. I noticed, too, the fine shade of brown of his silky beard, and when he looked full into my face when replying to some inquiry, I thought his dark eyes, all aglow as they were with intelligence, the most expressive I had ever seen. It was strange I had never noticed all that before.

Dinner was half over before my name was mentioned.

"I wonder where Miss Stewart is to-night," said Mr. Baker, at length, as he took the last piece of celery.

"I wonder, too," said Mrs. Rennecker. She looked worried,

and I could see that the probability that I, as Mr. Hyde, was not going to meet myself as Dr. Jekyll was weighing on her heavily.

Twice she sent the servant to my room to see if I had come in, and at each report of my non-arrival the cloud on her face deepened.

"I wouldn't give myself any uneasiness about it, mother," said Jasper, with a laugh. "She is able to take care of herself."

"Yes," assented Mr. Doyle, "she sometimes goes away for two or three days at a stretch without giving notice."

"A regular gadabout," put in Mr. Baker.

All that did not increase my self-possession, and I was heartily glad when the meal was ended. After dinner, not having myself to cultivate, I did the next best thing, and began to get acquainted with Jasper Rennecker. Really he was a wonderfully interesting man when you once came to know him.

I did not try to make any plans for maintaining the double existence into which I had insensibly drifted. Everything had come by chance so far, and I decided to let chance rule all future developments. So absorbed had I become in carrying out my rôle successfully that the whole affair seemed simply a prolonged theatrical performance. Indeed, my conscience was not punctured by a single pang, and I never slept more sweetly than on the first night I spent in Ada Mosby's hall bedroom, while Constance Stewart's beautiful room beside it was unoccupied.

During the following week I became simply a creature of impulse. Wednesday afternoon I went over to Chestnut Street, doffed my detective attire, and in the original character of Miss Stewart went around to 360 Oak Street.

"Where on earth have you been?" asked Mrs. Rennecker. "I wanted to see you so badly last night. I have a friend here from Pittsburgh — a Miss Mosby. I was telling her about you, and she is very anxious to meet you."

I stayed for dinner, then made another trip to Chestnut Street, and returned to Mrs. Rennecker's in the guise of Ada Mosby.

"Well," she said, "you've missed it by going out. Miss Stewart was here this afternoon. She went out just about an hour ago. I'm afraid she won't be back until quite late."

For three days I kept up the strain of this double rôle, appearing first in one character, then in the other; then as Mrs.

Rennecker had become well-nigh frantic with the futility of her endeavors to bring about a meeting between my two selves, I was forced to desist.

"I don't want you to leave this house again for so much as five minutes," she said pettishly. "The minute you step out Miss Stewart steps in. My intuition tells me that she's engaged in scheming of some sort."

Had Mrs. Rennecker been a writer of the Gospels she could not have spoken more truly. After that I stayed closely indoors through the sultry July days, but Miss Stewart did not return.

I had been there ten days. Jasper and I sat on the porch one evening watching the red-lamped bicycles flash past like so many fireflies, and making the most of the gentle breezes that had commenced to blow in from across the lake after sunset. We were alone and we were silent. At last Jasper cleared his throat, and I knew he was going to say something personal. He always hemmed a little before beginning on personalities.

"If you keep this thing up much longer," he said, "you'll drive mother crazy."

"Keep up what thing?" I said.

"This detective business."

He laughed, and before I had fairly understood the situation he had taken my hand.

"You could fool mother," he said, "but not me. She doesn't love you as I do. I was behind the portière at your first interview, and knew you were Constance Stewart the minute I heard you speak."

"You did?" I gasped. "And what did you think?"

But what he thought, and what he said, and what I said belong in another chapter with which my detective instinct has nothing to do whatever. That evening Ada Mosby stepped out of the house, and sent the following telegram: —

Have seen Miss Stewart, and learning of her engagement to your son, have thrown up the case. Shall not return. ADA MOSBY.

Out of consideration for Mrs. Rennecker's feelings, neither her son nor her daughter-in-law have divulged to her the inner history of that telegram and the episode that led up to it.

As for Margaret, she had been engaged to Baker all the time.